

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEHRAN 08350 311432Z
ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T TEHRAN 8350

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PINS, IR
SUBJ: MEETING WITH HOVEYDA

REF: STATE 221260

1. I HAD A GOOD LONG MEETING WITH HOVEYDA MORNING AUGUST 31 AT HIS RESIDENCE. I WAS DELIGHTED TO FIND HIM FULL OF BEANS AND ITCHING TO HAVE A CANDID CONVERSATION WITH ME.
2. AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, HE TOOK SOME CREDIT FOR LEADING THE SHAH TO THE CONCLUSION THAT POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION AND FREE ELECTIONS WERE THE ONLY WAY TO GO. HE REVIEWED THE ALTERNATIVES "A MILITARY SOLUTION WOULD LAST FOR ONE DAY ONLY") AND SAID THE SHAH WAS FIRMLY AND IRREVOCABLY SET ON THIS COURSE OF ACTION BECAUSE ANY OTHER COURSE WOULD SPELL THE END OF THE MONARCHY.
3. I SAID WE SHARED HIS ANALYSIS OF SITUATION BUT IT WAS MY IMPRESSION THAT SHAH HAD NO RPT NO ENTHUSIASM FOR HIS DECISION. I HAD FOUND HIM TENSE AND DEPRESSED.
4. HOVEYDA CUT IN TO SAY THE RIGHT WORD WAS "DISGUSTED."

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SHAH FELT IRANIANS WERE BENT UPON TEARING THEIR NATION APART. HE WAS GOING TO LET THEM HAVE DEMOCRACY BUT SEEMED CONVINCED THEY WOULD MAKE A MESS OF IT.

5. I SAID THAT SHAH COMPLAINED THERE WERE NO "PATRIOTS" COMING FORWARD TO STAND IN THE ELECTIONS. HOWEVER, IF HE CONFRONTED SUCH "PATRIOTS" WITH HIS CURRENT HANGDOG

EXPRESSION RATHER THAN A SHOW OF CONFIDENCE, WE WOULD FIND ALL THE POTENTIAL CANDIDATES LINED UP AT OUR CONSULATE LOOKING FOR GREEN CARDS. HOVEYDA AGREED AND SAID FIRST STEP IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS HAD TO BE TO GET THE SHAH OUT OF HIS CURRENT MOOD AND TO GIVE A SENSE OF LEADERSHIP TO THE "DECENT" POLITICAL FIGURES.

6. HE SAID HE WAS CONVINCED THSH'S MOOD WAS TEMPORARY. HE WAS A FIGHTER BY INSTINCT AND ONCE HE GOT INTO THE SPIRIT OF A GENUINE ELECTION CAMPAIGN, HE WOULD GIVE IT SOME SPARK. HE SAID HE THOUGHT A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT CARTER WOULD PROBABLY BE A GOOD FLINT TO IGNITE THE SPARK. I SAID I HAD SOME INDICATIONS FROM WASHINGTON THAT SUCH A LETTER WAS CURRENTLY IN PREPARATION. HE SUGGESTED, WHEN IT CAME, THAT I LET HIM PRESENT IT TO THE SHAH "WITH THE RIGHT MAYONNAISE."

7. I THEN ASKED WHO WAS GOING TO ORGANIZE THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. I SAID AHMAD QUOREISHI OF THE REASTIKHIZ TOLD ME HE WAS PREPARED TO TAKE A LEADING ROLE, BUT WAS NOT SURE WHAT VEHICLE TO USE. HOVEYDA SAID HE WAS MEETING WITH RASTIKHIZ LEADERS THAT AFTERNOON TO DECIDE WHETHER TO KEEP THE PARTY OR START A FEW NEW ONES. HE ALSO SAID HE HAD SCHEDULED MEETINGS WITH OPPOSITION LEADERS (HE WAS HAVING LUNCH WITH DR. AMINI) BECAUSE "IT IS ALSO SECRET

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IMPORTANT TO DECIDE WHO YOUR OPPOSITION SHOULD BE."

8. I ASKED HIS ASSESSMENT OF POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE COUNTRY. HE SAID THAT, AT THE MOMENT, NOBODY HAD A DECENT POLITICAL RPT POLITICAL ORGANIZATION. THE MULLAHS AN AYATOLLAHS OBVIOUSLY HAD AN ORGANIZATION, BUT HE WAS NOT SURE THEY COULD OR WOULD USE IT FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES.

9. THIS LED TO A DISCUSSION OF HIS CONTACTS WITH THE CLERGY. I RECALLED THAT HE HAD TOLD ME IN JUNE THAT HE EXPTECTED TO BE ABLE TO SPLIT THE CLERGY AND BRING THE MODERATES BEHIND THE GOVT. HE SAID IT DIDN'T WORK BECAUSE THE KHOMEINI PEOPLE HAD FRIGHTENED THE MODERATES. I SAID I ASSUMED THAT THE IISUES OF CORRUPTION AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE ROYAL FAMILY HAD ALSO STOOD IN THE WAY. HE AGREED AND SAID, "THANK GOD WE'VE FINALLY FACED THOSE ISSUES."

10. WE THEN DISCUSSED THE QUESTION OF RUMORS CONCERNING A U.S. ROLE IN THE DISTURBANCES. I SAID I WAS ANNOYED THAT SENIOR OFFICIALS KEPT RAISING THIS WITH ME IN

MANNER WHICH SUGGESTED THEY THEMSELVES BELIEVED IT.
I THOUGH EVEN THE SHAH HAD SEEMED AMBIVALENT ABOUT IT.
I REPORTED WHAT FOREIGN MINISTER HAD ASKED ME TO DO
(SEPTEL) AN SAID I THOUGHT THAT WAS SIMPLISTIC AND
POSSIBLY COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. HOVEYDA AGREED
AND TOL ME TO IGNORE THE SUGGESTION. INSTEAD, HE
PROPOSED TWO COURSES OF ACTION:
(A) HAVE OUR "SERVICES" TALK WITH CHIEF OF SAVAK
AND COMPARE INFORMATION BOTH HAVE ON FOREIGN INVOLVE-
MENT IN RECENT EVENTS,
(B) HAVE OUR EMBASSY OFFICERS INDICATE TO THEIR
IRANIAN INTERLOCUTORS THAT THE U.S. BELIEVES THE
SHAH IS THE BEST PERSON TO LEAD THE MOVEMENT TO
POLITICAL DEMOCRACY.

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11. I AGREED TO BOTH HIS SUGGESTIONS AND SAID I WOULD
ARRANGE TO CARRY THEM OUT. HE SAID THESE WERE ONLY OFF
THE TOP OF HIS HEAD AND HE MIGHT WISH TO SUGGEST OTHER
ACTIONS AS WE GO ON. HE PROPOSED THAT WE MEET REGULARLY
ON AN INFORMAL BASIS TO COMPARE NOTES AND KEEP THE SHAH
POINTED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.
SULLIVAN

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